

Chilled Cucumber Pesto Soup

Ingredients for the pesto

2-3 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 cup olive oil
2 cups firmly packed basil leaves
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Preparation for the pesto

Combine the garlic, olive oil, and basil in the food processor and blend until smooth. Stir in the Parmesan cheese. Set this aside.

Ingredients for the soup

½ cup of the pesto (see recipe above)
2 cups peeled, seeded, and diced cucumber
1 ½ cups plain, low-fat yogurt
½ cup reduced-fat sour cream
2 tablespoons white vinegar
salt & pepper, to taste

Preparation for the soup

Combine the above in the food processor and blend until smooth. Serve very cold, garnished with basil or edible flowers.

Curried Rice Salad

Ingredients

2 cups rice, either brown or a combination of brown and wild
4 - 5 cups water
1/3 cup olive oil
1 heaping tablespoon curry powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon nutmeg
½ teaspoon ground cardamom
2 teaspoons tamari or light soy sauce
juice of ½ lemon
1 cup dried fruit (your choice), soaked in hot water for 20 minutes
½ - 1 sweet red pepper, chopped
2 stalks celery, thinly sliced on the diagonal
scallions, to taste
salt & pepper to taste
½ cup toasted cashews

Preparation

Cook the rice and transfer to a serving bowl.

Heat the olive oil in a skillet and add the curry powder, cumin, nutmeg, and cardamom. Cook over low heat for 1 minute to infuse the spices into the oil. Pour this mixture over the rice.

Stir in the dried fruit and vegetables; add salt and pepper to taste.

Refrigerate for several hours for best flavor.

Add the cashews at serving time.

Chocolate Almond Cake

Ingredients

3 oz bittersweet chocolate
1 oz unsweetened chocolate
2 tablespoons coffee
1/3 cup blanched almonds & 2 tablespoons sugar
1 stick butter
½ cup sugar & ¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon almond extract
3 large eggs, separated
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar & 2 tablespoons sugar & pinch of salt
½ cup cake flour

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°F and set rack at middle level. Grease and flour one 8-inch round cake pan.

Melt the two chocolates together with the coffee in the microwave. (1 minute on 30% power repeated as needed, until almost completely melted, then stir to finish melting)

Grind the almonds and sugar in the food processor; set aside.

Cream the butter and sugar and salt in either the food processor or a mixer. Once they are pale, soft, and fluffy, add the egg yolks, one at a time. Blend the chocolate mixture and the ground almond mixture into the creamed butter. Add the almond extract.

Beat the egg whites in the mixer until broken up and foaming; add the cream of tartar and salt. Slowly increase the speed to fast and gradually add sugar until stiff peaks form. Plop ¼ of the egg whites into the batter and stir to lighten the batter. Delicately fold in the remainder of the egg whites, alternating with siftings of cake flour.